



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

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ARMED ROBBER OF POST OFFICES SENTENCED
TO 20 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

OCALA, Florida - Senior United States District Judge Wm. Terrell Hodges today sentenced SHELDON DEAN CHRISTOPHER WATT, age 26, of Lake Mary (FL), to twenty years' imprisonment on five charges - conspiracy to commit an armed robbery of a postal facility, assault on a postal facility employee, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence, unlawful receipt and disposal of property of the United States, and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number. In addition to the prison sentence, WATT must serve five years on supervised release and pay a special assessment of \$500. WATT was found guilty of the charges on September 7, 2006, after a federal jury trial. WATT'S co-defendant and girlfriend, Jillian Dale Rodriguez, pled guilty in August and is scheduled for sentencing on January 22, 2007.

According to the evidence presented at trial, WATT and Rodriguez conspired to rob post offices at gunpoint in Sorrento (Lake County) and Tangerine (Orange County), Florida, from April 5 - May 19, 2006. During the robbery of the Sorrento post office, employees of the facility were restrained with plastic ties and held at gunpoint while the

masked robber threatened to harm them and members of their families. The robber seized more than three thousand dollars' worth of currency, stamps and the employees' personal property before fleeing in a large postal delivery truck. In the Tangerine robbery, WATT threatened the postmaster and a customer with a firearm before obtaining approximately six hundred dollars in currency from the cash drawers and a customer's wallet. WATT also stole several money orders before leaving in an automobile driven by Rodriguez. Both WATT and Rodriguez were captured one week later as they attempted to cash one of the stolen money orders at a post office in Lake Mary (Seminole County), Florida. A search of the couple's nearby apartment revealed two ski masks, a firearm with an obliterated serial number, clothing worn by the robber, the remaining stolen money orders and the missing driver's licenses and identification cards from victims in both robberies.

The case represents the culmination of a cooperative effort between the United States Attorney's Office, the United States Postal Inspector's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"), and the State Attorney's Offices for Orange, Seminole and Lake Counties. This is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program "Project Safe Neighborhoods" - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from ATF. United States Attorney Paul I. Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials. The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert E. Bodnar, Jr.